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Sports Madness: Boxing, Baseball, NCAA, The Bucs

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SPORT AND SOCIETY FOR H-ARETE
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The volume of accumulated goofiness is once again reaching environmentally dangerous levels. ESPN is in danger of being transformed into Comedy Central.

First, there was the fight. For weeks people were saying it would be no contest, couldn't possibly go more than one round, MacNeely and his cacoon of horror were from stiff city. Then when Hurricane MacNeely was downgraded to a tropical wave, when the fight was shorter than the national atheumn, these same prophets of pessimism were outraged that it was a fraud; that everyone who had paid big money to sit in Vegas or at home on Pay Per View had been robbed; that Don King had perpetrated a hoax on the American public.

How could they say this? Everyone knew up front it was a joke. And it was. So what. If people wanted to put down big bucks to say I was there, that's their problem. It's not like they went into this thinking they were really going to see a fight. So why all the fuss?

There were certainly more important questions raised by this fight than those about its authenticity.

No sooner had the fight ended than another matchup was announced. No not Tyson and the next stiff. I'm talking about Shaq v. Hakeem, O'Neill v. Olajawon, One on One. Full page ads in the papers in Orlando, Houston, The New York Times, USA Today, shouted out the news.

Funny I thought this match had already taken place in Orlando and Houston last June, and that it had been fairly decisive. Hakeem put on a clinic for the 300 lbs. 7 footer as I remember, and it wasn't a pretty sight for Magic fans.

The sponsorship of this fiasco is also an odd coupling. Who would have ever thought of Taco Bell and Trump as a pair? Next we'll have Wal-Mart and Tiffanies, or K-Tel and City Bank, the kitchen magician and Mercedes, bringing you the gridiron showdown of the year, the terrible tussle in Tallahassee, UCF v. FSU. It's enough to make you want to put Grey Poupon on your hot dog, and wash down your Dom Perignon with some Old Milwaukee.

If this wasn't goofy enough the NCAA was ready to do their part by instituting a fifteen yard penalty for celebrations and other kinds of demonstrations. Then word got out that this included a

ban on kneeling to pray in the end zone. That took the absurdity to a new level as praying players and coaches denounced this unprovoked attack on prayer and god. Certainly the NCAA would burn in hell for this one.

I must say I have never understood why prayer and god have become such a presence on the American sporting scene, unless it was some sort of plot by the promoters of athletics to increase the social significance of what is essentially a meaningless pastime. I personally have regarded all of this praying on the playing field as blasphemous, and have been waiting for the running back to take off his helmet, bend his knee, and get struck by lightning. And then a loud voice would come over and above the PA system to say, "Don't ever make me look ridiculous again. And furthermore I hate football."

I am also waiting to hear someone say after striking out when the game is on the line that they want to thank the lord for giving them this opportunity to build character. Or more simply that God made them strike out.

Also in the, can you believe it, category comes those many people, including some otherwise reasonable and lucid sportswriters and commentators, suggesting that Cal Ripkin ought to 1) stop before he breaks Gehrig's record or 2) sit after he ties Gehrig's record. Why? This is an incredible record being put together by a guy who resembles Gehrig in style and personality, and it is his great achievement that he will break the record. He has not played through injuries all these years to toss it off in the end. Records are made to be broken, and I hope Ripkin plays for a thousand more games after he passes Lou Gehrig.

Finally as if to demonstrate that the silly season is in high gear, there are people talking seriously about the Tampa Bay Bucs as a Professional Football team. Did you know the Bucs were 3-1 in the exhibition season, or as the NFL would have it, The Preseason?

Well isn't that impressive. And did you know that this is the team that has lost at least ten games a season for ten years now? This is the team that has an incredible record of bad drafts, fired coaches, disastrous trades, and tragic problems befalling its players. Yes, this is the same Tampa Bay Bucs who are under the dreaded, Curse of Doug Williams. There is after all a history here, so let's not get too excited yet. The Bucs are still the Bucs.

On Sport and Society this is Dick Crepeau reminding you that you don't have to be a good sport to be a bad loser.

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